

THOUGHTS
CONCERNING THE
METHODISTS
AND THE
Established Clergy.

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THOUGHTS

CONCERNING THE

METHODISTS



BY GEORGE COLE, D.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES. THE FIRST VOLUME CONTAINS THE HISTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH, AND THE SECOND VOLUME CONTAINS THE HISTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN AMERICA.

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PREFACE.

TO stop the progress of error, is to advance the interest of truth. The intention therefore of the following tract, cannot with propriety be censured, but the manner in which it is written may require many apologies. Yet as apologies are unavailing, and as the hope of doing the smallest service to religion is a sufficient justification, the author, besides what is now offered, requests enthusiasts to read carefully a sermon of Dr. Paley's, preached at Carlisle, at a visitation in 1777.

THEY will there find how they misapply words and terms to the condition of Christians in these days, which were only applicable to the condition of the first Christians.

He first shews that none were baptised but converts, none were converted but from conviction, and conviction produced, for the most part, reformation. In these times, many are baptised in tender age, and too many walk unworthily of the vocation wherewith they are called. In the next place, he shews that the terms applied in the primitive ages, such as saints, elect, chosen generation, &c. were to distinguish the Christians from Heathens, implying, at the same time, a general superiority in goodness.

In the third place, he shews that foreknowledge, predestination, purpose or election, imply only an admission into the Christian covenant, without any reference to the future destination of individuals so called.

FOURTHLY, he shews that the conversion from Heathenism to Christianity, is a change of which we have now no conception. "There was (to use his own words) a new
" name, a new language, a new society, a
" new

“ new faith, a new hope, a new object of
“ worship, a new rule of life, a history was
“ disclosed full of discovery and surprize, a
“ prospect of futurity was unfolded, beyond
“ imagination awful and august.”

WE learn from hence why Christians were said to be born again of God and the Spirit, to be alive from the dead, to be created again, to be sons instead of slaves, citizens instead of foreigners, from having been not a people, to be the people of God.

SUCH is the substance of a concise and excellent sermon, abridged here for the use of those who may not have the opportunity of procuring the sermon itself.

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THOUGHTS

CONCERNING THE

Methodists and the Established Clergy.

INNUMERABLE are the sermons and treatises which have been written in refutation of the opinions of the deluded Methodists. The shortest and most intelligible tract which I have seen, is that of Bishop Gibson, against enthusiasm, published by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. There it will be seen with what absurdity the two leaders, Wesley and Whitfield, apply to themselves what was only applicable to Apostles and Prophets. They did not pretend to work miracles, but both of them claimed a sudden, a wonderful effusion of the holy spirit upon their minds, so as to ascertain the moment of conviction and conversion. What happened to themselves, is said to have happened to many more; they triumph in the tears, convulsions, and agitations of many of

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their hearers. Satan is supposed to be losing ground daily, and by a singular confusion of comparison, the regenerate, while acquiring the condition of new born babes, suffer all the pangs of parturition, not figuratively but literally.

THE following observations upon the conduct and tenets of Wesley, Whitfield, and their proselytes, admit not of regular arrangement. Of the two, Wesley is allowed to have been the most learned. As founders of sects, they were jealous of each other, and have been compared to Cæsar and Pompey. Their superstition shewed itself early in their ministry, by casting lots, in one or two instances, to know what they should do. It is remarkable that in one instance, Whitfield did not *chuse to act* as the lot required. Similar superstition gave rise to the ancient trials by ordeal and by combat. By the way, while *we set God always before us*, let us be cautious how we impute to his immediate agency, what may have happened in the common course of things. Nothing can either hurt us or do us service, without a power *originally* given from above. But after that power is once given, we do not presume that God is continually

continually interfering to weaken, to withdraw, or to counteract it. Even the passage of Scripture which informs us that *not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father's notice*, is, by judicious Commentators, understood as a strong figurative expression denoting the general care of the Almighty over all his works. The manner, and the degree of this superintendence, either in the material or intellectual world, we are not able to explain.

BEFORE I proceed, let me once for all, observe that I mean not to pass that uncharitable censure upon Wesley or Whitfield, which they passed upon the Clergy and Laity, who were not their proselytes. I mean not to charge them with procuring contributions to enrich themselves. They had an indisputable claim to an honourable maintenance from their followers, and this they readily found. They had establishments to make and to support, which they thought proper and laudable, there were preachers to be maintained, and buildings to be raised, and most of the considerable market towns in England have lasting memorials of ex-

pences incurred by erecting large, and often magnificent houses.

YET in their journals and their letters, there appears a mixture of spiritual pride and affected humility. They seem both persuaded that they were chosen vessels. Whitfield revived the opinion of the Puritans concerning particular predestination. He, in defence, alledges, "It were odd to say that Christ "died for all the souls that are in Hell." Surely it is not inconsistent to say that all the souls in Hell might have been saved through the merits of Christ, if they had repented.

BOTH of them rose early, read the scriptures and certain other writings, but Wesley's reading was more enlarged, his knowledge of languages more extensive, his reasoning was more close, though often intermixed with a pert and flimzy kind of sophistry. Some of his directions concerning children are useful, others are nugatory or impracticable.

HE was, as his biographer Mr. Hampson acknowledges, fond of rule, and impatient of contradiction.

contradiction. This conduct admits of some palliation when we consider that his preachers, with a very few exceptions, were men of mean talents and little education. His comparison of them with the English Clergy deserves not a serious answer. He compared them with persons, whose attainments as an aggregate body he could not know. That of twelve or fourteen thousand clergymen, some may be deficient in talents, and some in morals, and some in both, will readily be admitted. And what profession is without its dross? If recrimination would exculpate, I could quote well attested examples of dishonest and shameful conduct among the Teachers of Fanaticism.

*DR. KNOX, upon his authority too, Dr. Wendeborn has asserted, that our public

* Bishop Burnet too, in his day, seems to have represented the Clergy in a light sufficiently unfavourable. When we consider the credulity, the party-spirit, and the malignity of that prelate, we shall not place that implicit confidence in his assertions, which his station seems to demand. He might be as unjust to others as he was to Prior, especially to his adversaries in politics, of whom the pious Mr. Norris was one, whom he treated with marked illiberality.

Dr. Samuel Carr surely did not mean to involve all the Clergy, and it was his duty to have said that he had no such intention when

places of amusement abound with idle and dissolute Clergymen. It is admitted that a very small number of such characters is too great abundance. In Bath, after careful en-

he wrote in the following manner. I neither wish to speak evil of dignities, nor to become an accuser of the brethren, but really when I contrast the learning, sanctity, decency, gravity, and piety of the ancient Ecclesiastics of this land, with the levity, ignorance, idleness, and irreligioufness of those reverend Harlequins in motley habits, who miscall themselves divines, when I weigh the solid, learned, and edifying discourses of the former, with the frothy, puerile, and illiterate rant of these modern declaimers, who catch at the applause of the admiring multitude, I cannot but conclude that either the primitive teachers of God's word bestowed much unnecessary labour upon their ministry, or that we fall much short of our duty, of what ought justly to be expected from us, and of what we solemnly promised at the time of our ordination.—

SERMON 55.

It must be considered that this is the language of one who saw the evils he complained of in the Metropolis, and in the aggregate. Part of the accusation adheres to the Methodists themselves, and part of it is owing to the vicious taste of the people to whom some of our clergy preach, and upon whom too many of them are unfortunately dependent.

Some indulgence, after all, is due to a lively imagination, and to the inexperience of youth. Most of us remember, in the course of a literary education, that we have been captivated by flights of fancy in others, and that we have, in the early part of our ministry, given way to them ourselves. We have juvenile discourses which we shall either entirely suppress, or materially alter; yet as they were composed with purity of intention, so, it may be presumed, that

quiry upon the spot (and Bath is as fair an instance as can be produced) I assert with confidence, that is not the case. The few Clerical Gamesters who are seen there, are spoken of with marked contempt, and just abhorrence. It were well if all serious men would unite in stating their conduct to their respective ordinaries.

WESLEY and Whitfield speak with contempt of human learning, yet they give us scraps and trite sentences from Latin authors, such as any boy at school can easily repeat. Wesley grossly misapplied his time and talents when he affected to be the physician of the body as well as of the soul. Of his credulity it is no slight proof, that he recommends water drinking as a cure for the drop-sy. Whitfield and some of his followers actually prophesied that his new-born son would

that with all their imperfections, they might be productive of real advantage to the hearers. In our eminent divines who have shone as authors, we have found some hasty beginnings, and perhaps in the very best, and in their full maturity, some luxuriances may be discovered which discretion might safely prune. The sublime in theology claims the same privilege with the sublime in other compositions, it will not adjust trifling inaccuracies, or correct inferior faults.

enlighten the world by his preaching. The child died in a few months. I mean not to insult the feelings of a parent, but to lament the presumption of deluded religionists.

IN the arrangement of his preachers, Wesley displayed the most consummate worldly wisdom. He knew that many have itching ears, and that novelty would attract them to his meeting houses. He suffered no preacher to remain long in one place, and every application for such a purpose met with a stern refusal. The sameness of matter more particularly required this variety of instructors, for the practical duties very seldom entered into their discourses.

WHITFIELD and Wesley were equally fond of telling stories in their sermons, and these stories have been often heard and repeated with laughter or contempt. It is one thing to be plain, and another to be coarse and vulgar. Let the sermon upon the Mount, let St. Paul's and St. Peter's discourses, let all the epistles stand as examples of elegant simplicity. They ought to have known that vociferation is not necessary in a preacher, that he need
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not * "sweat through and through," and that he may cry aloud in the prophet's sense of the word, without bellowing. They ought to have known that an audience may be edified, without being harrassed and distracted, and convinced of the necessity of faith and repentance, without being convulsed. Yet Whitfield triumphs in the agitations of women and children. Wesley was, generally speaking, calm and tranquil, and more objections lie against his matter than his manner. Whitfield, rejoicing in every opportunity of censuring the Clergy, repeats a saying of Betterton's, accounting for the inefficacy of sermons, and the influence of plays. "Players," said he, "speak of things fictitious as if they were real, and the Clergy speak of things real as if they were fictitious." This elegant antithesis, borrowed by the Man of God, from one whom he deemed a Child of Satan, contains an attracting jingle of words, but devoid of truth. Is a christian orator to descend to all the gesticulations of the stage, and to rant like a tragedy king? Hope and fear, joy and grief, love and hatred, enter into the subjects of our

* Whitfield says this of himself.

discourses.

discourses. But these passions change with their objects. They are to be excited by pathetic language, or by plain and easy argument. If we must, for a moment admit of the most distant similitude between the oratory of the stage and the pulpit (though it is offensive even to hear dramatic writers quoted in sermons) let me be permitted to say that some of the most eminent performers in our English theatres, have, in the more tranquil scenes, displayed an easiness of manner, which every one, ambitious to speak well, would be happy to imitate. Were Garrick himself to rise from the dead, there can be little reason to doubt that he would at least pronounce a sermon in a calm and unagitated way, for so he is said to have pronounced his own ode at the Stratford Jubilee. Many upon the stage, where the virtues and the vices of men are heightened above reality, are apt, after all, to overact their part, sometimes because they do not understand it, and not unfrequently to please the galleries.

SOME will refer a christian preacher to the orators of the bar. They are allowed to put themselves in the place of their client, and to express, without restraint, his hopes, his fears,

fears, his resentments. They are allowed to season their speeches with jocularities, with wit, with irony, with repartee. What a wide difference there is between the temporal and the spiritual concerns of men? With what a due solemnity should the latter be distinguished from the former? By these observations we mean not to exalt the clerical profession, but to establish that discriminating respect which is due to the subject matter of their discourses, and the sanctity of the place wherein they are delivered.

THE authority of the Spectator is sometimes adduced against a calm delivery of sermons. Yet Addison himself has warmly recommended South and Tillotson, neither of whom were theatrical, and whatever Steele may have said in disparagement of the Clergy of his day, will pass for nothing with those who know the real feebleness of his understanding, and the profligacy of his manners. Vehemence, it is said, makes an impression upon unlettered hearers. Is the impression on the understanding or the imagination? If upon the latter, a tragedian can do infinitely more. At best, it seems transient, or creates melancholy, if it be lasting.

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A DESIRE of pleasing should reign in every human mind to a certain degree, but it should be a desire of pleasing those who have sound judgment, and unshaken integrity. Under such a restriction, to have gained the approbation of the wise and virtuous, is to have gained a concurrent approbation with that of a well-informed conscience. The medical empiric preferred the nineteen to the twentieth. The theological empiric follows his example, and gains admiration. The regular Christian Minister remembers that he is accountable to a higher and more awful tribunal than that which man setteth up.

RASHNESS of criticism in the young, the ignorant, or the unexperienced, should be discouraged by every possible method. Let them accept the following anecdote. When Dr. Durell was Vice Chancellor of Oxford, he resolved never to request the publication of any sermon. I may, said he, be mistaken on either side of the question; I may be instrumental in making public what ought to be suppressed, or by inadvertency deprive the world of an excellent performance.

WHEN we hear of discourses proper to be spoken, yet not intended to be read, we
may

may pronounce without hesitation, that they are unworthy our attention.

THAT in a christian country, Wesley or Whitfield suffered personal outrage, every one will lament. But to exclude them from churches was certainly justifiable in men, who deemed their matter and their manner low and vulgar. The charge of ingratitude is unjustly brought by Wesley against his father's curate, for refusing him the pulpit at Epworth. We may presume him to act upon principle. But this meek disciple of a meek Saviour, pronounced otherwise, and consoled himself under his disappointment by haranguing from his father's tombstone.

WESLEY pronounces all anger sinful; yet in America he refused the sacrament to a lady, whose only offence was to have rejected his addresses*.

* The lady's name was Williamson, whose uncle called upon him to declare in the Court House, why he expelled her from the holy communion. He refused. The uncle said it was for refusing his proposals of marriage, and marrying Mr. Williamson. The husband prosecuted him for defamation, and the wife, says Mr. Wesley, swore and signed an affidavit, insinuating much more than it asserted; but asserting that he, Mr. Wesley, had many times proposed

Of the hymns which have been used in the Foundery and the Tabernacle, some are chargable with vulgarity or levity, and many of their tunes are better adapted for the votaries of Bacchus, than the disciples of Christ.

WHITFIELD recommends extemporary prayers in private, as well as before and after sermon. He charges preachers in Oxford and in other places, with omitting to beg a blessing on the word preached. Surely he did not attend either to the prayer before the University, for the canonical form of bidding prayer is now laid aside, nor to the prayer beginning "Prevent us, O Lord," and several others. The composition of prayers is by far the most difficult. If the pious author of the Rambler was often unsuccessful, who will not undertake the task with extreme diffidence? I am almost ashamed to communicate to the reader a petition which Romaine offered in St. Dunstan's church. "God

proposed marriage to her, all which proposals she had rejected. This great apostle, after seeking for revelations from Heaven, after taking the advice of friends, and after praying (for prayer always made a part in his stratagems) secured himself from farther prosecution by flight.—See Warburton's Doctrine of Grace, book ii. c. 12. where the account is given more at large.

" grant,

“grant,” said he, “that no one do any
 “thing this night, for which he may deserve
 “to be sent to Tyburn.”

WESLEY and Whitfield unite in their commendations of Law's Serious Call, and it may be read by judicious persons with great utility. It points out a duty for every part of our time, but with a rigour which has a tendency to discourage. Nor is the morality always correct. The laws of the land not only forbid us to relieve, but require that we should bring to condign punishment, those persons who have the appellation of street beggars. Mr. Law requires us not to be inquisitive about their merits or demerits, and Whitfield immediately quotes the example of blind Bartimæus. The Evangelists have related the incident, without discussing the lawfulness of begging. When there is an established national benevolence, the blind themselves should remain in their respective parishes; even they are not always temperate, and they are conducted by individuals, who, instead of being usefully employed, contract inveterate habits of idleness. Against other beggars, the arguments are much stronger;

stronger; they are commonly the worst members of the community, and deserve correction rather than pity*.

MUCH has been said by Wesley and Whitfield against plays and horse-races, against assemblies and balls. Perhaps the stage was never less exceptionable than at present. If it be not a school of virtue, it may be a source of innocent amusement. Of horse-races, without doubt, the evil by far outweighs the good. They bring together the

* It is a secret (says Dr. Samuel Carr, Sermon 26) I presume to no one, that there are many infamous impostors, who only counterfeit poverty, and cover themselves with rags and sores the better to extort relief from well-disposed Christians. There are others too, who are indeed in real want, but who are so through choice, they love idleness better than work, and rather chuse to beg than to gain an honest living by the work of their hands. These are they that snatch the bread of charity out of the mouths of the industrious poor, these are they that swarm in our streets, that besiege the gates of the rich, and weary every passenger with their cries for relief, which if denied, they immediately exclaim against the coldness of charity, and the barbarity of the world. I would not willingly be thought to plead against charity in any shape, and therefore I will not too severely condemn those, who, through a well-meant zeal, relieve such objects as these. But I cannot help saying, that in my judgment, they would shew themselves much wiser men, and better friends to the community, by not encouraging a tribe of vagrants, who will neither labour to provide for themselves, nor submit to that provision which the legislature has amply made for them.

refuse

refuse of the creation, they encourage gaming, and who will defend the casuistry of jockeys? What are the evils of balls and assemblies we have not yet heard. Can the two sexes meet in more innocent, and at the same time more pleasing intercourse? Nothing but an early introduction seems objectionable. Against private theatres we may enter a warm and a serious protest. They destroy that amiable diffidence so pleasing in both sexes, and so essential to the female sex.

MUCH censure is passed upon the Clergy of the Church of England, for their manner of living. Neither the marriage in Cana, nor St. Paul's exhortations to hospitality will avail. Who would be an advocate for sensuality and excess? But, as Walton observes, "good company and good conversation are the finews of virtue." We need not be surprised at the rigour of these two rivals, when we learn that among other regulations of Kingswood school, the boys were prohibited from playing, and that the discipline of the seminary in Savannah was uncommonly severe.

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MUCH has been said of the good which the Methodists have done under the guidance of their leaders. It is readily admitted that in Kingswood, in Coalbrook-dale, and in other parts of the kingdom, many who had no sense of religion were made serious and decorous. But with some good, they have done great mischief. They have made many melancholy. They have driven many to despair, and some to self-murder. They have alienated the affections of many from their regular pastors whom they have stiled self-righteous, letter-learned, licentious, and sensual. The people were advised to attend our churches, but were taught to despise the instructions delivered in them. All the reproaches accumulated upon all the false prophets of Israel, and upon the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, were too mild, and too gentle, when applied to the established Clergy. Every sermon that did not treat of the new birth, of justification by faith, and the merits of a Redeemer, was heathenism or popery.

So great was their zeal for making profelytes, that they were indifferent from whence the profelytes came, whether from a church
or

or a meeting-house. But from whichsoever place they came, they must either despise their own established instructors, or they must have a motley and grotesque religion of divers colours and complexions.

THEY alone, if we believe themselves, have adhered to the doctrines of the articles, homilies, and liturgy. This is a gross misrepresentation. They taught more than these doctrines, and we teach them as they were first delivered by our Reformers. In what part of our common prayer book can they find the inward, instantaneous, sensible call which they contend for? When a child is received into the church by baptism, what more can be meant by regeneration than his acquittal from the sin of Adam, his being placed under the protection of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the charitable presumption that his growth in grace will be analogous to his growth in stature?

THOUGH we admit the dire effects of original sin, yet we do not admit them to the degree so warmly contended for. We think that the image of God, though much defac-

ed, is not entirely lost, and the appellations of beast and devil, so freely bestowed upon human nature, are harsh and unfounded, except when applied to the most wicked and reprobate. We are not to be refuted by a few strong figurative expressions from Scripture ; every sign of virtue, every inclination to be good, meets with encouragement from a gracious God.

WE have at the same time no intention of explaining away the article which says “ that “ works done before justification, have in “ them the nature of sin.” Till a Christian apply the merits of Christ to his own particular case, he must be in a sinful state, for he wanteth faith, and is guilty of presumption.

CHRISTIANS are most in danger of mistaking a dead faith for that which worketh by the love of God and of our neighbour. We appeal to the effects by which it is known, as the tree is known by its fruits. If the Old and New Testament furnish precepts for all states and conditions of men, we ought to enlarge upon all these precepts, otherwise we are but partial expositors of the will of God.

God. As wise builders, we are not only required to lay a proper foundation, but to inspect with minute attention, every part of the superstructure.

WHITFIELD allows that much previous study is requisite to render a man able to preach extempore. Yet both he and Wesley seem to have believed something like immediate inspiration. Their followers, in the present day, are disposed to believe it, and were their teachers frequently to recur to their written discourses, we should hear of the Puritanical imputation that they were quenching the spirit. But will the Holy Ghost be less gracious because man is more diffident? The truth is, the common extemporary effusions of Methodists are an insult upon the understanding, and to ascribe them to inspiration, is little short of blasphemy.

IN the printed sermons of Whitfield and Wesley, there is often a plainness and conciseness of expression well worthy of imitation. But they have withal adopted what, for want of another term, may be stiled a pul-

pit slang. Hence it is that we find christlefs, prayerless, bedwarf, with many other compound words, often ludicrous, generally harsh and unnatural.

Now and then, one might be led to suppose that the difference between us and them is not great. Let the following passage from one of Whitfield's letters serve as a specimen. "The renewal of our natures is a work of great importance. It is not to be done in a day. We have not only a new house to build up, but an old one to pull down."

YET still we deny his position that a man has the same conviction of the new birth, which our bodily senses have of the blowing of the wind. The uncertainty of the manner is well expressed by our Redeemer. *Thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.*

WE also maintain that in a certain sense, the goodness of God "has made man in part "a Saviour to himself,"* for he is a free agent assisted, but not under irresistible influence.

* Whitfield's own expression.

THEY

THEY not only err in making no proper discrimination between the times of the Apostles and the present, but being strangers to the rules of sober criticism, they give to scriptural expressions, highly figurative, literal interpretations. The nature of the Eastern languages and idiom, they either know not, or do not consider, and they boast that they rely on their own diligence, and a supposed inspiration, without calling in the aid of such divines as are consulted by others with edification and improvement. Those writers, who fall in with their own notions, they have both read and praised.

DR. JOHNSON was known to have a particular veneration for the English divines, surely they will allow him to have been a sincere and zealous friend of religion. He recommends Dr. Clarke, as frequently enforcing the doctrine of atonement. This is also enforced in other theological writings, in many of the Bampton lectures, particularly by Hawkins, Wintle, and Veyfie.

IN Wesley and Whitfield we find general admonitions to good works, to the love of our neighbour. But we find no discourses on

particular moral virtues, or levelled against particular vices. Much less do we find any reference at all to cases of conscience, which, as they were often discussed in the last century, especially by Bishops Taylor and Sanderson, so they will be more attended to in this, if Paley and Gisborne have that success which they justly merit. Let me not, however, be understood to pay an unqualified deference to every position of each of these eminent and worthy men. If health and other avocations will permit, I intend, with due candour and respect, to state my objections. For the present, they have my warmest gratitude for what they have done, and I shall therefore, with the more diffidence endeavour to point out wherein they seem to have erred, and what they seem to have omitted.

If general good principles, moral and evangelical, should be acquired in early age, those principles can only be confirmed by a suitable application in particular incidents. Care should be used lest we be taken by surprize. Most of us have acted with too much precipitation, now and then with too much lenity or candour. We did not feel a consciousness of having greatly erred, of having notoriously
violated

violated any precept, and yet had there been time for longer deliberation, and more accurate enquiry, we should have acted far differently.

It would be to little purpose that we read the ten commandments, unless every duty to God and man be from time to time distinctly explained and enforced.

At certain intervals it is useful to shew the connexion which Christian duties have with each other, how unpardonable it would be wilfully and knowingly to violate any. A proper recapitulation enables every one to consult his own heart, and to learn his own defects.

PERFECTION, which has created so much dispute, is, in many instances, another name for universality of obedience, or uniform integrity, when integrity is taken in its fullest signification, and not merely for common honesty. When we are commanded to be perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect, the idea of *universality* is still retained, but it is applied to benevolence.

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FOR absolute perfection here, none of us, and few of the Methodists, ever contended. It is somewhat wonderful, that amidst all which they have maintained concerning the new birth, they should not pursue the comparison between the natural and the spiritual life; and admit the same gradations in piety, as in bodily strength and stature. A child is said to have the perfect use of his faculties when he is born without bodily blemishes and defects. A christian is perfect in a certain sense, when he is disposed to do all good to the uttermost of his power. From the blade we may hope for a good harvest. A blight may disappoint us. The limbs that promise strength may wax feeble. Evil communications may at once destroy all the expectations we formed of the sincere Christian. All our precaution against falling off cannot be too often repeated, and their presumption concerning particular election cannot be too often exploded.

THERE is also a relative perfection, after which we are commanded to aspire, which bears the same resemblance to our first performances in the christian life, that the actions of a man bear to the actions of a child.

WE

WE must do all we can, and leave the event to a merciful Creator.

IN Whitfield's works is published a letter to the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, concerning the expulsion of six enthusiasts from Edmund Hall. In the inaccuracy which appeared in drawing up the articles of accusation, as I am not concerned, so I shall leave it as I found it. The combination of the charges justified the measure. To have been brought up to trades was not, of itself, an offence, but the complicated offence was, to enter the University without knowing the rudiments of the languages, to frequent conventicles, and to wrangle with the tutor. To select instances, therefore, of other men, who had passed from various occupations, first into the University, and afterwards into the church, was little to the purpose, unless it had been proved that these persons were illiterate and incapable of academical instruction. As little was it to the purpose to expatiate upon the irregularities of some young men in the University, for these are, with ingenuous minds, their own remedy. But fanaticism is an incurable evil. What could induce the Principal of Edmund Hall to disgrace himself, his College,

College, and the University, by this absurd admission, is not easy to say. While he chose to preach, his sermons at St. Mary's were sound and orthodox, though certainly destitute of all animation.

BUT since one of the six young men was an exception as to school education, the sequel of his history may illustrate the crooked casuistry of a fanatic. He applied to the Vice Chancellor, and the Assessors, under a seeming conviction of his error, pretended to recant, and was recommended to a Bishop for ordination. When the mask had answered his purpose, he threw it off, and preached in Lincolnshire for some time, under the patronage of an enthusiastic lady of distinction. At last he was promoted to a vicarage in a populous part of Yorkshire, where he boasted of his expulsion, delivered his absurdities in rhapsody and tautology, was guilty of rapacity and extortion, and at last died insolvent. What follower of Ignatius Loyola could have exceeded this?

THAT ecclesiastical preferments are often improperly bestowed, no one can deny. The best of them should be the rewards of eminent learning,

learning, united with an amiable disposition. Yet as the characters of clergymen are well appreciated by their contemporaries, instances of successful merit need not be selected, and every friend of religion will wish that they were more numerous.

THERE are many among the English Clergy, who content themselves with the satisfaction of applying to books, and performing the duties of their station, and who, because they are too diffident to become authors, are lost in retirement to all but a few select friends.

To procure presentations for fanatical divines has been the avowed purpose of one noble Earl, and some gentlemen of opulence. They have now and then made overtures to purchase, especially in populous places. The town of Hull affords one unfortunate instance of their success, and all the churches there, with the exception of one individual, are occupied by the pretended favourites of Heaven. The reader will excuse my melancholy remembrance of the late respectable vicar of the Holy Trinity in that place, who was harassed by the impudence, insolence,
and

and coarseness of a Lecturer, whose constant practice it was to claim the exclusive privilege of preaching evangelical doctrines. Of the Lecturer's pulpit oratory, I beg leave to subjoin the following specimen. "Did any
 " of you ever ask Jesus Christ to sup with
 " you,—if not, ask him to-night;—and if he
 " should come after you are gone to bed, rise
 " up and let him in." Of the effects of his doctrine let the following proof suffice.—When three clergymen officiated at the altar, one third of the places was appropriated to the lecturer, and in these it was usual for him to administer in both kinds. The fanatics, estimating the efficacy of the Sacrament by the imagined sanctity of him who was to administer, gave a decided preference to these places. It unfortunately happened that the Vicar went where the Lecturer used to go, and one of these sons of purity spurned the piece of sacramental bread which was offered, and took another from the plate. *This would have been a justifiable cause of exclusion,* but the Vicar's feelings overcame his resolution, and he submitted.

It is to be feared that the new church at
 Halifax will resemble the new church at
 Hull,

Hull, with this specific difference, that at certain times when Dr. C. or his Curate shall officiate in the edifice, of which the first stone is now laid, the ladies must use their fans to hide their blushes. The clerical enthusiasts are already anticipating appointments to the chapels in the extensive parish of Halifax, twelve in number, with many old incumbents, and in the disposal of the Vicar.

IF the enumeration of these particulars, however minute or insignificant they may appear, should increase the zeal, should stimulate the industry of sober-minded men, if it should in any degree call forth the vigilance and generosity of those who can procure, purchase, or dispense preferment, we may still hope that fanaticism will decline, as some of its chief champions and supporters are sunk into the grave, and have left distraction and divisions behind them, even in their head quarters.

HAVING recommended Dr. Gibson's small tract against enthusiasm, let me also mention to those who have greater leisure, Bishop Warburton's Doctrine of Grace. The second book is suited to all capacities, and the

the scope of it is best expressed in the Bishop's own language at the conclusion.

“ THE reader will take notice that the order I have here followed is that which is best adapted to shorten the controversy, and to cut off all chicane and evasion.

“ 1. I HAVE singled out the founder and leader of the sect, that no one may have pretence to say, that what he is here shewn to teach and practise, is not true and genuine Methodism.

“ 2. I HAVE confined my remarks to his own adventures, recorded by his own pen, and here fairly quoted in his own words, that no one may have pretence to say, I have foolishly confided in false or uncertain reports or unjustly made the sect answerable for the indiscretions and absurdities of every obscure field-preacher.

“ 3. I HAVE taken the Methodists at their word, when they call themselves members of the Church of England, that I might not run the hazard of confounding both the reader and myself with long and blind scholastic

“ scholastic disputations on *original sin, irresistible grace, and justifying faith; on regeneration, election, reprobation, and the immerit of good works.* To their mode of teaching, and not to *things* taught, I confine my discourse. Of *that*, every reader can judge, and of that he has a sure rule to judge by, the marks delivered by the holy Apostle St. James of *the wisdom which is from above*, marks, which for weighty reasons already explained, refer mostly to the *mode* of teaching, and which, if not found in this new methodistical mode of teaching, are sufficient to convict it of imposture.”

SURELY this was fair and candid treatment, yet still it is contended that to commission men notoriously illiterate, under the idea of being divinely inspired, as preachers of the word of God, is a notorious offence, not only against God, but against the general order of society, wherein he, who sustains any public function, ought to undergo examination, and be delegated by proper authority. Considered as a profession only, the clerical should be guarded from intrusion by its own members, as the other two learned professions are; to a certain degree. Unfortunately

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each

each of them is infested with empirics, it is the duty of regular practitioners to watch over them with a jealous eye, to shew them that marked disapprobation which presumption joined with ignorance has always deserved.

If this counsel be of men, it will come to nought, has been quoted by some of the adversaries of methodism, as a reason why a Clergyman may safely allow any field preacher to enter his parish, and to unhinge the principles of his flock. The law has pointed out the only regular way in which the preachers of methodism can be accommodated. A licensed house places them under the public protection. Under any other circumstances they are liable to be apprehended as vagrants, or fined, as not protected by the Toleration Act, and all that continue to hear them, after being apprised of their danger, should be compelled to pay the penalty. For, as Sir William Blackstone says, when commenting upon an Act which forbids Magistrates to carry the insignia of office to a meeting-house, “a mode of worship, set up in opposition to the national, should be exercised with decency, gratitude, and humility.” What apology

apology therefore can an illiterate itinerant make, who collects together a disorderly crowd, immediately before, or immediately after divine service? Why a legal procedure against such miscreants should be called persecution I know not; let us never forget the alliance which Swift has pointed out between them and two other kinds of orators.

WHETHER their doctrines have produced the reformation of manners which not only they themselves, but even candid men of a different persuasion, contend for, admits of much doubt. Though I do not believe all which has been reported of their love-feasts, yet neither is the whole a fable. In their ordinary dealings with mankind, numerous instances of rapacity and injustice may be produced, and several of them have held up their hands at the bar for very notorious offences. The evil ends not here. It would be easy to prove that very flagitious attempts have been made by the fraternity in the neighbourhood, on such occasions, to impede the course of justice, and to solicit the Royal mercy. Let all the advocates of William Jordan, of Bilston, convicted of buying stolen lead, hide their heads for shame.

THAT common mechanics should easily be induced to become preachers, cannot be matter of surprise, when we consider how much the office flatters their vanity, contributes to their emolument, and enables them to live in idleness.

NOR are they, in general, insensible to the gratifications of their appetites. No worldly comfort is thought too great for these spiritually-minded men, who, when once they gain admittance, will subject families to large, and often inconvenient expences. In one or two well-authenticated instances, these expences were estimated at fifty pounds per annum.

THE supineness of the English Clergy, and the evils of non-residence and pluralities are common subjects of declamation. And these supplementary preachers very kindly come forward to remedy the evil. I beg leave to answer, that the whole stock of preferment is inadequate to the purpose of properly rewarding meritorious clergymen, but were the hopes of ecclesiastics still more contracted, all the great abilities of the country would have recourse to other professions and callings.

lings*. It were easy to prove that in a mercantile line, in law and in physic, there are more examples of prosperity than among the Clergy. Of those who find preferment the progress is often slow, and he who obtains five or six hundred pounds per annum, is not only thought singularly fortunate, but to usurp more than his share. Excluded from secular employments, he is contemplated as receiving this great emolument for little more than reading prayers, and preaching on a Sunday. The labour of learning, the expence of education; and his private studies are so thoroughly kept from view, that malignity throws its darts in every direction, while many others, with whom he associates, are, with pretensions not superior to his own, accumulating fortunes without the aid of inheritance. The Clergy also, though assisted by the kindness of the Laity, make large donations to the widows and orphans of their deceased brethren.

* We find great pains taken to prevent the late Earl Camden from going into the Church. His friends in the Law would not suffer such eminent talents to be *buried* in the clerical profession. It would have been more correct had they said undervalued and unrewarded, for Theology affords ample exercise for the highest attainments.

IN the rage of reforming, many pleas for non-residence were omitted, stronger than some of those which are allowed. I humbly conceive, notwithstanding, that more latitude of construction is admissible. Be this as it may, let benignity in the ordinary, and in all other persons concerned, supply the defect, and let not a worthy, conscientious Clergyman, be dragged from his comforts, his friends, and connexions, if he labours faithfully in the vineyard as a deputy, if his assistant be equally conscientious with himself*.

* Having once heard a prelate enlarge upon the several legal excuses for non-residence, I could not help wishing that he had added something to the following purport. "But, my reverend brethren, there are numberless other cases which the Legislature did not foresee, any of which I shall examine with candour, if brought before me, and will never recommend severe measures, except against a clergyman who is actually doing nothing, or per-
severingly suffers his church to be neglected, or improperly supplied."

Indeed I cannot help wishing that all charges wherein any strictures upon the conduct of the Clergy are contained, and that charges in general, were delivered to none but the Clergy themselves. Numerous instances might be given in which exhortations to residence, to solemnity of dress, and general deportment, have been quoted with unqualified malignity, against those who did not reside, or those who partook of any innocent amusement. And the slightest deviations, under such circumstances, will be treated with the most

THE most populous parishes in the kingdom are frequently ill endowed, or seldom supply more than adequate maintainance for one clergyman, where many are wanted. The motive of educating children is one good reason why Clergymen with large families may seek employment in market towns. As the livings in those towns are often small, Sir William Dawes, when Archbishop of York, gave a laudable example of augmenting them by bestowing prebends upon the incumbents.

BUT Reformers have found out an adequate remedy for all the evils complained of, by equalising ecclesiastical preferments. That a disappointed Bishop should wish for an equal share of emolument with the Bishop of Durham, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, was not to be wondered at, and yet Mr. Luther's bequest, with a Professorship, an Archdeaconry, and a Living, might console him under his disappointment. Eccle-

most unforgiving rancour. A writer in the Gentleman's Magazine, after exemplifying this in the article of dress, recommended that in future, charges should be given in Latin. To this there are many material objections, the principal of which is, that when modern ideas are to be expressed in ancient language, the composition will be motley.

+ Watson Bishop of Land aff.

fiastical property received a material shock by the rapacity of Henry VIII. and however it might answer the purposes of a crafty Plunderer to divide the spoils among needy Courtiers, it would be difficult to prove, with all the common place abuse of Monks and religious houses, that the receivers were more worthy than they who were plundered*.

* Whoever wishes to learn, without prejudice, the uses and abuses of religious houses, will find that the former were very important, and greatly preponderate against the latter. The reader shall judge for himself from the following extract.

Tanner's Notitia, by Nasmith, p. xli.

First, the choicest records and treasures in the kingdom were preserved in them. An exemplification of the Charter of Liberties, granted by King Henry I. was sent to some abbey in every county to be preserved. Charters and inquisitions relating to the county of Cornwall, were deposited in the Priory of Bodmin, a great many rolls were lodged in the Abbey of Leicester, and Priory of Kenilworth, till taken from thence by King Henry III. King Edward I. sent to the religious houses in search for his title to the kingdom of Scotland, in their ledgers and chronicles, as the most authentic records for the proof of his right to that crown. When his sovereignty was acknowledged in Scotland, he sent letters to have it inserted in the chronicles of the Abbey of Winchcomb, and the Priory of Norwich, and probably of many other such like places. And when he decided the controversy relating to the crown of Scotland, between Robert Bruce and John Baliol, he wrote to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, London, requiring them to enter into their chronicles the exemplification therewith sent, of that decision.

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WE shall be reminded of new Bishopricks, and other foundations. But it were easy to prove, that the impropriations which were

The learned Mr. Selden hath his greatest evidences of the Narrow Seas belonging to the King of Great Britain, from monastic records.

The evidences and money of private families were often sent to these houses to be preserved. The seals of noblemen were deposited there upon their deaths, and even the King's money was sometimes lodged in them.

Secondly, They were schools of learning and education, for every Convent had one person or more appointed for this purpose; and all the neighbours that desired it, might have their children taught grammar and church music without any expence to them. In the Nunneries also, the young women were taught to work, and to read English, and sometimes Latin also; so that not only the lower rank of people, who could not pay for their learning, but most of the Noblemen and Gentlemen's daughters were educated in these places.

Thirdly, All the Monasteries were in effect great Hospitals, and were most of them obliged to relieve many poor people every day. They were likewise houses of entertainment for almost all travellers. Even the Nobility and Gentry, when they were upon the road, dined at one religious house, and lodged at another, and seldom or never went to inns. In short, their hospitality was such, that in the Priory of Norwich one thousand five hundred quarters of malt, and above eight hundred quarters of wheat, and all other things in proportion, were generally spent every year.

Fourthly, The Nobility and Gentry provided not only for their old servants in these houses by corrodies, but for their younger children and impoverished friends, by making them first Monks and Nuns, and in time Priors and Prioreesses, Abbots and Abbeesses.

Fifthly,

granted away to create the revenues of those establishments, have most shamefully impoverished the parochial Clergy.

Fifthly, They were of considerable advantage to the Crown.

1. By the profits received from the death of one Abbot or Prior to the election, or rather confirmation, of another. 2. By great fines paid for the confirmation of their liberties. 3. By many corrodiess granted to old servants of the Crown, and pensions to the King's clerks and chaplains till they got preferment.

Sixthly, They were likewise of considerable advantage to the places where they had their files and estates. 1. By causing great resort to them, and getting fairs and markets for them. 2. By freeing them from the forest laws. 3. By letting their lands at easy rates.

Lastly, They were great ornaments to the country; many of them were really noble buildings, and though not actually so grand and neat, yet perhaps as much admired in their times, as Chelsea and Greenwich Hospitals are now. Many of the Abbey Churches were equal, if not superior, to our present Cathedrals, and they must have been as much an ornament to the country, and employed as many workmen in building and keeping them in repair, as Noblemen and Gentlemen's seats now.

As, however, we are not aiming at panegyric, but stating the truth, the same author proceeds in the following manner. On the other hand it must be confessed—First, that these Regulars were very injurious to the Secular and Parochial Clergy. 1. By taking many Prebends and Benefices. The Abbots of Athelney, Michelney, and Becc Harlowin, had Prebends in the Cathedral Church of Wells annexed to their Abbotships. And in the Metropolitcal Church of York, the Prebend of Salton was annexed to the Priory of Hexam, and the Prebend of Bramham to the Priory of Nostel. And so many other Priors and Monks of all sorts, and even Friars got dispensations to hold Prebends and Livings, that at or just before

To unsettle any kind of property is dangerous, whether possessed by testamentary donation, or by immemorial usage. What man of talents would engage in the clerical profession with the scanty prospect of 150l. per annum. He must be something more than man, if he exclude worldly prosperity from the choice of his future calling; and he is not less likely to do his duty conscientiously in that of a Clergyman, though he were actuated partly by prudential motives. He could not have the vanity to think, that among so many labourers the choice of any individual could materially affect the cause of Christianity, and yet, as his obligation is of too sacred nature to be violated after he has once engaged, he will be *ready to give a reason of*

fore the Reformation, Bishop Burnet saith, They were every where possessed of the best Church Benefices. 2. By getting so many churches impropriated to them, and getting pensions out of many others. 3. By the many exemptions they got from the jurisdiction of the Bishops, and from paying tythes.

Secondly, These houses of Monks and Friars seem to have been injurious to the nation in general. 1. By depriving the public of so many hands as might have been serviceable to it in proper employments. 2. By an unfair and ungenerous way of trading. 3. By their houses of churches being sanctuaries for all manner of offenders.

the hope that is in him, he will spend the leisure which is allowed him in the acquisition of useful knowledge.

By the way, much censure is passed upon the purchase of presentations and advowsons. How fallacious is speculation? Within the narrow sphere of my own acquaintance, I can point out some of the worthiest incumbents, whose presentations were fairly and legally purchased. Let not the remark appear nugatory. Every remark is important which lessens calumny against an order of men, the success of whose labours must depend upon the good opinion of their fellow creatures.

STILL the wickedness of the world is owing to the non-residence of incumbents. (The reader will do me the justice to believe, that I mean not to defend a wanton dereliction of duty in the Clergy).

SURELY men's abilities and exertions are not to be measured by their incomes. Therefore why so much declamation against Curates? If some pay more attention to the station than the individual, this, in religion, is an absurdity

dity that cannot be sufficiently condemned. The doctrine is the same, and demands the same regard, whether he who delivers it be rich or poor.

Should there be any unfortunate dispute concerning tithes, which more frequently happens by the fault of the Parishioners than of their Minister, it is certainly much more adviseable to change the place of his residence, and to live where he can live in peace and tranquility. Yet let him not act with unmanly timidity, where he is conscious of fair and equitable proposals. The claims of his own household are substantial, and supersede the imaginary claims of avarice and selfishness.

As there are many parishes supplied by the incumbents themselves, let us see whether even they, acting in a manner suited to their solemn engagement, have that success which is contended for. Every one of us can unhappily prove the very reverse. We can prove, that there are too many whom reproof would not reclaim; that vice and idleness find their way into country villages, as well as into

into populous towns; that the sabbath is profaned; that the public worship is neglected; that the duty of catechizing is ill attended. Sunday schools, and the circulation of cheap publications, will do much service, and many tares will grow up with the wheat.

DR. PRICE, and some others, with equal malignity and falsehood, have asserted, that much of the wickedness of the world is owing to systems and stated forms. If some articles of faith be disputed, between us and them, let them point out, if they can, wherein, even upon their own principles, our morality is deficient. Let them prove, if they can, that any part of it is omitted either in our prayers or our discourses, or that even when we discuss articles of belief, we are not still mindful how they tend to improve us in goodness.

BUT were the people to chuse their Ministers, it is said much evil would be prevented. Dr. Johnson was of a very different opinion, though his Biographer (Mr. Boswell) was not. Did this gentleman ever read a humorous account of the London Lectureships?

Were

Were he alive, I would refer him to that account, and to what is passing every year in the metropolis. There, and wherever else, the parishioners elect are facts too certain to be denied, and too obstinate to be resisted. I would ask him as an advocate, how *he* would feel himself affected, were his talents and acquirements to be judged of by a multitude? So fascinating are figures of rhetoric and a little ostentatious eloquence, that a flimsy orator would gain the victory over the most profound literature. Let us suppose for a moment Lowth and Warburton drawn up against Dodd and Langhorne, what would be the event? Nay, instances might be produced, wherein regularity of education has had no weight against irregularity, even with some of higher stations, with persons whose friends and relations have been properly trained for the clerical function. By this I mean not to insult literary and studious men, though they were not educated in any university.

If my feeble voice could be heard, I do most sincerely wish, that no popular recommendation may be ever attended to. Every vacant benefice should be open to deserving candidates,

candidates, and the patron is more likely to chuse right amongst a number, than when his nomination is confined to one. It were invidious to specify instances, otherwise I could easily prove, that refusal has been attended with beneficial consequences, and compliance has been detrimental. The result is, whatever evils arise from the present state of ecclesiastical patronage, they would only be increased by delegating the power of presentation to the people.

If mediocrity of talents be too often successful in the church, let us not forget, that it is too often successful in every other department, even in those which affect either health or property. Herein no sacrifice to friendship or ceremony is intended, and yet ingenuity is often neglected. It is a vulgar error, that merit in law and medicine is invariably successful. We have one consolation as Clergymen, that anxious as we are to see eminent talents engaged in the service of Religion, and to find those talents properly rewarded, the parochial duties may be performed with faithfulness and efficacy by men of more moderate attainments.

WHAT-

WHATEVER may be the imperfections or the omissions of the parochial Clergy, for they are magnified by the tongue of malice, they will not be remedied by men, who "deal damnation round the land" with uncharitable zeal, and who approach the bed of sickness with the harsh language of Inquisitors, who so far from administering properly to a wounded conscience, will often find out wounds which never existed. The time of health is the proper season when Christians may be properly solicited to seek the consolations of Religion, and if sickness detain them from public worship, their faithful Pastors will be at hand to assist devotion, particularly in those who have little education, and can receive no advantage from books.

'THE Methodists, as far as we can learn, are real friends to the King and Constitution, but in Religion they have introduced a leveling principle, which, if it do not entirely destroy, certainly weakens all the claims of abilities, learning, and diligence, and which imputes vanity and self-sufficiency to those who study natural and moral philosophy,

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with

with the learned languages, in order to understand the word of God more perfectly. The predisposing influence of useful knowledge is little attended to, and not unfrequently denied; and as the converts to this persuasion are called upon unequivocally to surrender their reason, and to place an implicit confidence in their illuminated instructors, so the instructors themselves, having been unable to arrive at eminence and distinction by ordinary and legitimate means, never could, nor ever can shine, except, as meteors or ignes fatui, in the darkened hemisphere of fanaticism, ignorance, and superstition.

Enthusiasm operates most powerfully on weak minds, but should it from bodily disease, or from any other accident, find its way to a vigorous and active mind, like a raging fever, it will create debility and languor, and too often bring on mental convulsions and delirium.

To continue, and as far as possible to improve the blessings of a regular Ministry in the Church of England, it is to be wished,
that

that they who are intended for the profession may be sent to respectable seminaries, that in those seminaries they may be taught the principles of the Christian Religion from Lewis, from Wake, from Secker, and from Gilpin ; from the practical discourses of our eminent Divines, and from a careful perusal of the Old and New Testament, that they may perform the sacred exercises of Westminster school, and reduce the several Articles of Belief, and the Commandments, into prose Latin compositions, in the manner of Nowell's Catechism, that either before they leave school, or as soon as possible after their admission in the university, they may learn the rudiments of the Hebrew language, for the drudgery of learning languages is best sustained in the early part of life ; that they afterwards cultivate general knowledge, dwelling upon those parts which are most suited to their respective capacities ; that they acquire settled habits of diligence, by filling up the time of vacation as well as of term ; that they regard what is useful, more than what is splendid ; that with a suitable attention to their mode of enunciation, they feel a rivetted contempt

contempt for pomp, noise, and gesticulation;
and that both by their preaching and living,
they resolve to deck Religion in the orna-
ments of a meek and quiet spirit.

FINIS.

4 AP 65

ERRATA.

For tranquillity, read tranquillity.

P. 46, for and many, read and yet many.

P. 42, n. for files, read fites.

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